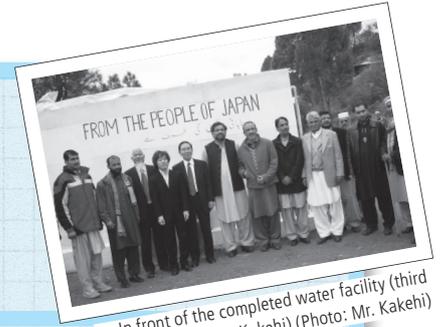


Water is the Property of Everyone — Project to Improve the Water Environment in Pakistan —



In front of the completed water facility (third from left, Mr. Kakehi) (Photo: Mr. Kakehi)

In Japan, water is easily accessible and readily available for drinking. In many developing countries, however, it is a large burden to fetch water, because, for instance, people live far away from wells and have to buy supplies from water sellers when large quantities are needed for ceremonies and other events. Recognizing that water is essential to life and that water issues are critically important for the achievement of the MDGs, Japan has been providing various assistance to developing countries to make safe water more readily available there.

In Pakistan, a Japanese NGO, the Japan Mine Action Service (JMAS), in cooperation with the Government of Japan^(*1) and since June 2009, has been providing assistance to build water facilities^(*2) in Muree, Punjab Province, near the capital city of Islamabad. The situation of water in Pakistan is very serious. In addition to a shortage of water facilities, the water itself is polluted and because of unsanitary water, approximately 350,000 people lose their lives every year. Moreover, during periods without rainfall, there is little water to be had. Women and children who come from afar to fetch water have to spend hours to get their water jugs full, and sometimes even work through the night due to long waits for collecting water.

Mr. Kakehi, Representative of JMAS to Pakistan, stated his ambitions for the project. He says, "Unlike electricity and gas, water is absolutely necessary for people to keep on living. I hope our efforts will contribute to ensuring water with good quality to them and to promote friendship between Japan and Pakistan."

Although many residents looked forward for facilities, Mr. Kakehi had to face a number of challenging situations. For instance, landlords of the places where water tanks were constructed demanded payment for use of the land. Perhaps in part because they had large expectations, residents also requested Mr. Kakehi to establish more tanks than budget allows. Furthermore, they asked him whether water pipes

could be constructed to reach each household or not. Mr. Kakehi explained persistently to residents the size of budget and that "water is the property of everyone," and succeeded in getting residents' agreements.

By the completion of Phase I in April 2010, there had been built four large and small tanks and a 10 km (total) pipeline^(*3).

In addition to the construction of water facilities, Mr. Kakehi encouraged the residents to establish a water union. This initiative fits in with JMAS's vision to support self-empowerment through international cooperation and is designed to equip the residents with the skills to be able to maintain the facilities on their own. Saying he hopes "the residents will treat water as their own property, and with their own hands, preserve high quality water and protect the facilities for many years to come," Mr. Kakehi taught residents how to examine water quality, clean tanks, connect water pipes, and other skills.

Thanks to the efforts of Mr. Kakehi and others, there has been a change in attitude among the members of the community. Stemming from their desire to take good care of the water facilities, people who live in this community began to write down "Don't waste water" on the stainless box which protects the faucet of the water tank.

In addition, the construction of water facilities has transformed the lives of children and women who were primarily fetching the water. Freed from the heavy labor of obtaining water, women now have more time to attend to their household chores and children can now go to school and concentrate on their studies.

Mr. Kakehi states, on the future of Muree, "This water facility, which JMAS constructed with the assistance of Japanese people, is the shared property of all the residents. I hope they will protect carefully the facility forever, and I am confident that they will do it."



Boys at the water supply area (Photo: Mr. Kakehi)

*1 The Grant Assistance for Japanese NGO Projects.

*2 The first Water Supply System Construction Project at Rural Area of Tahseel Muree, Rawalpindi District, Punjab Province. (Phase I)

*3 Phase II started in June 2010.